

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “21st Century Cures: The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and
Technology (PCAST) Report on Drug Innovation”
May 20, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today marks our first 21st Century Cures hearing at the Health Subcommittee. We launched this bipartisan initiative earlier this month with one primary goal: accelerate the pace of the discovery, development, and delivery cycle so we can get innovative new cures and treatments to patients more quickly. Today, we continue this important conversation with several of the distinguished experts who contributed to the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology report on drug innovation.

The president, in soliciting recommendations on this important topic, decided propelling drug innovation is a policy worthy of exploring and advancing. I could not agree more.

In their report, the president’s advisors found that the nation’s biomedical innovation ecosystem is under significant stress, citing the patent cliff facing the pharmaceutical industry, declining investment from venture capital and decreasing research and development in critical areas, including Alzheimer’s. We have heard similar concerns in our discussions with patients, innovators, and thought leaders.

In order to address these issues facing our biomedical innovation ecosystem, the experts who contributed to the report recommended closing scientific knowledge gaps, addressing inefficiencies in clinical trials, considering new economic incentives to increase investment, and encouraging even more innovation at the Food and Drug Administration.

The president’s advisors put forth the following goal for our nation:

“Double the current annual output of innovative new medicines for patients with important unmet medical needs, while increasing drug efficacy and safety, through industry, academia, and government working together to double the efficiency of drug development, by decreasing clinical failure, clinical trial costs, time to market, and regulatory uncertainty.”

I think we can all agree to join the president and his advisors in meeting this goal.

As the president’s advisors so rightly said, we must work together to achieve this goal. This must be a collaborative effort. The committee recently put out a call for feedback on the PCAST report. We also asked for input from our nation’s patients on the discovery of treatments and cures for their diseases. The 21st Century Cures initiative ultimately touches everyone – patients, doctors, loved ones, researchers, thought leaders – and we want input from all those involved. Email your ideas to cures@mail.house.gov and contribute to the conversation on Twitter and Facebook using the hashtag Path2Cures. Together we can provide hope to patients and families all across the country and keep America at the forefront of innovation.

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